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Recommended Citation

Quast, Sylvia, "The Kennedy Center" (2016). *Art Education Case Studies*. 2.
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THE KENNEDY CENTER

THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION ON ARTS AND DISABILITY

Sylvia Quast





<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcuH2MH7Jew>



WHAT IS THE VSA?

- VSA- Very Special Arts, an affiliate of the Kennedy Center
- The VSA is an international organization with the goal of providing art accessibility to children and adults with disabilities
- Founded in 1974, more than 7 million people participate in the program every year
- Today there are 36 affiliates in the United States, and 52 international affiliates that provide art education

JEAN KENNEDY SMITH

“Art is not a luxury, art is central to what makes us fully human”

- Founder of VSA
- Sister of President F. Kennedy and former U.S. Ambassador to Ireland
- Has first-hand knowledge of difficulties that people with disabilities face as her older sister, Rosemary, had an intellectual disability
- Believes that every person has the right to artistic pursuit and that there should be no barriers to hold back a person from reaching their art goals





PURPOSE OF THE VSA

- The goal of the VSA is to provide educational opportunities in art, access to cultural facilities and the ability to develop appropriate skills for careers in the arts
- Also work with art educators and schools to prepare to include students with disabilities into art lessons
- Provides children and adults with disabilities the chance to participate in all aspects of visual and performing art where opportunities would not be available otherwise
- The organization offers several programs for young artists:
 - VSA Playwright Discovery Program
 - VSA International Young Soloists Program
 - VSA International Art Program
 - VSA Emerging Young Artists Program
 - These are just a few of the many programs offers



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- In Special Education, art lessons are nearly nonexistent as classes are taught with Common Core Standards for math and English
- In most cases, teachers are trained to work disabilities into a lesson plan
- Teachers need to teach off certain standards, and are simply not trained to incorporate art into lesson plans.
- As a result many students with disabilities will not be exposed to art outlets



FOUR PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE VSA

- Every young person with a disability deserves access to high quality arts learning experiences
- All artists in school and art educators should be prepared to include students with disabilities in their instruction
- All children, youth and adults with disabilities should have complete access to cultural facilities and activities
- All individuals with disabilities who aspire to careers in the arts should have the opportunity to develop appropriate skills.



GUIDING ART EDUCATORS

- Starting in 2013, VSA holds a conference, VSA Intersections: Art and Special Education Conference, in which to discuss research, practice, program development, curricula and policy in regards to the intersection of art education and special education
- The Conference brings together those who seek to see the improvement in special education through the use of the arts
- In addition to the conference, the Kennedy Center offers programming around the integration of arts education and special education
 - Materials include publications, lesson plans, activities and webinars



PROS

- Providing art education to children and adults with disabilities when there are no other opportunities given to them
- Offers various programs of art in performing, visual and literary arts
- Offers a platform for participants to showcase their artworks
- Lessons are tailored to adapt to the student, not to the student adapting to the lesson
- Helps to train educators to include art lessons with lesson plans for students with disabilities
- The program works towards the integration of art education and special education



CONS

- There are still states and countries that do not have affiliates



SOURCES

- <http://education.kennedy-center.org//education/vsa/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcuh2MH7Jew>
- <http://www.cerebralpalsy.org/information/activities/arts/vsa-special-arts>
- <https://www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/The-Kennedy-Family/Jean-Kennedy-Smith.aspx>
- <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/cc/>